

Testimony of

Master Corporal Vincent DiSabatino

Master Corporal
Wilmington Police Department
September 22, 2006

Statement of Vincent J. DiSabatino
Judiciary Committee Field Hearing
Fighting Crime: The Challenges Facing Local Law Enforcement
and the Federal Role
Wilmington, DE

CHAIRMAN SPECTER AND SENATOR BIDEN, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY ABOUT THE CHALLENGES THAT LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS FACE ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS.

THE LOCAL PATROL OFFICER FACES MANY CHALLENGES. AND, I'M HERE TO DISCUSS THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY LOCAL OFFICERS - FROM THE OFFICER WORKING THE BEAT TO THE PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICER WHO HAS TO DEAL WITH THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT ONCE THEY ARE RELEASED BACK INTO SOCIETY.

IT SEEMS THAT EVERYDAY WE ARE REMINDED OF THE IRAQ WAR AND THE UNFORTUNATE CASUALTIES THERE. WE HEAR ABOUT THE KILLING OF INNOCENT WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THE NEVER ENDING CHALLENGES FACING THE IRAQI PEOPLE. WE ARE TOLD WE NEED TO SEND MORE TROOPS, MONEY AND SUPPLIES TO FREE THE PEOPLE OF THAT COUNTRY FROM FEAR AND TERROR.

I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THE STRUGGLES AGAINST CRIME HERE AT HOME. CRIMINALS HAVE TERRORIZED AMERICANS IN COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE NATION MAKING THEM AFRAID TO GO OUT INTO THEIR OWN NEIGHBORHOODS AND ENJOY SOME OF THE SAME FREEDOMS THAT WE ARE TRYING TO BRING TO THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ. THESE NEIGHBORHOOD TERRORISTS CONTROL AND LOCK DOWN WHOLE CITY BLOCKS, MAKING CITIZENS AFRAID TO GO OUT OUTSIDE, PREVENTING CHILDREN FROM PLAYING IN THEIR FRONT YARDS OR NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS. THESE GANGSTERS HARASS AND KILL INNOCENT PEOPLE WITH THEIR DRUG TRADE AND ILLEGAL WEAPONS. QUITE SIMPLY, THEY HOLD NEIGHBORHOODS AND CITIES HOSTAGE.

THESE CRIMINAL ARE NOT DUMMIES. EVERYDAY THEY BECOME SMARTER. THEY BUY THE LATEST TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT SO THAT THEY CAN CONCEAL THEIR WEAPONS, THEIR CONTRABAND, AND THEIR MONEY FROM THE LAW.

THEIR ONLY GOAL IS TO MAKE MORE MONEY. AND, THE LORE OF MAKING MORE MONEY BRINGS THEM NEW RECRUITS EAGER TO LEAN THE BUSINESS AND WORK THEIR WAY TO THE TOP "BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY."

IN MY VIEW, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY IS BEHIND THE EIGHT BALL. WE FIND OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES, MONEY, PERSONNEL OR EQUIPMENT NEEDED TO TURN THE WAR ON DRUGS AROUND IN OUR FAVOR. IT IS CRITICAL THAT OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECEIVES THE FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP POLICE DEPARTMENTS PROTECT THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.

THE PRIMARY ISSUE IN MANPOWER - THE ABILITY TO PUT MORE POLICE ON THE STREET IS CRITICAL. ONE PROBLEM IS FUNDING, BUT ANOTHER IS THAT WE ARE SHORT OF QUALIFIED APPLICANTS. WE NEED TO DO MUCH MORE TO RECRUIT QUALIFIED CANDIDATES TO A CAREER IN LAW ENFORCEMENT.

ONE PROBLEM WE SEE IS THAT DEPARTMENTS LOSE PERSONNEL FASTER THAN THEY CAN AFFORD TO REPLACE THEM. WE ALSO SEE THAT DEPARTMENTS TRY AND FILL THE MANPOWER VOID BY POSTING OVERTIME, MAKING THE ALREADY OVERWORKED POLICE OFFICER EVEN MORE OVERWORKED. THIS ELIMINATES PREVENTIVE PATROLLING AND COMMUNITY POLICING. THE BEAT COP WORKING ON OUR CITY'S STREETS, HAS BECOME A MEMORY.

AND, THIS IS CRITICAL. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT PEOPLE SEE THE SAME OFFICER IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD DAY IN AND DAY OUT. IT IS CRITICAL TO HAVE AN OFFICER THAT KNOWS THE TROUBLE SPOTS AND THE TROUBLEMAKERS. JUST AS IMPORTANT, COMMUNITY POLICING ALLOWS COMMUNITY TO KNOW THE OFFICER - TO TRUST THAT OFFICER, WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY HELP SOLVE CASES BECAUSE WITH THIS TRUST THEY WILL CALL IN INFORMATION THAT MAY HELP SOLVE A CASE. THIS IS A VITAL LINK TO SUCCESSFULLY FIGHTING CRIME.

I CAN TELL YOU NO OFFICER WANTS TO SEE BARS ON WINDOWS AND DOORS, AN EMPTY PARK, OR PARENTS FORCE TO RUN INTO THEIR HOME WITH THEIR CHILDREN SO THAT THEY DO NOT BECOME A SHOOTING VICTIM. UNFORTUNATELY, THESE ARE COMMON SIGHTS IN THE HILLTOP AREA, THE BUCKET, AND THE VALLEY.

THE JOB OF BEING A POLICE OFFICER HAS GOTTEN TOUGHER OVER MY CAREER, AND I AM CERTAIN THESE CHALLENGES WILL ESCALATE OVER TIME. WE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT PROGRAMS THAT HAVE HELPED STATES, COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IN THE PAST CAN BE STARTED UP AGAIN. I HOPE YOU CAN HEAR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ASKING FOR MORE TROOPS AND THE MUCH NEEDED SUPPLIES TO FIGHT THIS DOMESTIC WAR THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON TOO LONG ON AMERICAN SOIL.